

**LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT AMONG THE PORTUGUESE  
EURASIANS IN THE PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT**

**SUDESH NICHOLAS RAMACHANDRAN**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
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SUDESH NICHOLAS RAMACHANDRAN

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines language maintenance and shift among the Portuguese Eurasians living in the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca. Firstly, this study focuses on the use of Kristang in seven domains: work/school, transaction, family, neighbourhood, friendship, entertainment and prayer. Secondly, it investigates the attitude of the subjects towards Kristang, English and Malay.

The instrument used in conducting this study is a forty-two item questionnaire administered on sixty-four respondents based on the variables of age, gender and socio-economic status.

The findings indicate that the use of Kristang among the community members is decreasing in almost all the domains studied. The findings also reveal that in place of Kristang, English is fast becoming the dominant language among the younger generation community members. However, among the youngest age group (aged 12 to 19), it is discovered that Kristang is still actively used, especially among the male subjects in their intragroup peer interaction. It is also noted that there is promise of the survival of Kristang within the family domain as this same group also communicates with their grandparents in Kristang.

In the final analysis, the survival of the Kristang language will eventually depend on the community's concern for their beautiful language and its significance to their ethnic identity against the pragmatic reasons for social and economic upward mobility, the latter of which may certainly promote language shift.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meninjau pemeliharaan bahasa dan pengalihan bahasa di kalangan anggota masyarakat Portugis yang tinggal di Perkampungan Portugis di Melaka. Selain daripada mengkaji penggunaan bahasa Kristang di dalam tujuh 'domain' yang dipilih: pekerjaan/sekolah, urusniaga, keluarga, kawasan kejiranan, persahabatan, hiburan dan sembahyang, kajian ini turut cuba menentukan sikap kaum Portugis ini terhadap bahasa Kristang, Inggeris dan Melayu.

Kajian ini telah dijalankan dengan menggunakan soal selidik yang mengandungi 42 soalan. Maklumat berdasarkan variabel umur, jantina dan status sosio-ekonomi telah diperolehi daripada 64 responden yang ditemuramah.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan Kristang di kalangan anggota masyarakat adalah berkurangan di dalam kebanyakan 'domain' yang dikaji. Didapati juga bahasa Inggeris lebih digunakan dikalangan generasi muda. Sungguhpun begitu, Kristang masih digunakan secara aktif di kalangan kumpulan generasi yang termuda (berumur 12 hingga 19 tahun) terutamanya responden lelaki dalam interaksi antara kaum etnik yang sama yang sebaya. Penggunaan Kristang dalam perbualan dengan datuk dan nenek mereka menunjukkan bahawa bahasa tersebut mungkin akan terpelihara dalam 'domain' keluarga.

Secara kesimpulan, status bahasa Kristang di kalangan masyarakat Portugis mungkin akan terpelihara sekiranya mereka lebih mementingkan identiti etnik daripada kepentingan sosio-ekonomi mereka. Walaubagaimana pun, sekiranya mereka lebih mementingkan taraf sosio-ekonomi mereka, besar kemungkinan pengalihan bahasa daripada bahasa Kristang akan berlaku.

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